

HCS HB 855 -- PRIMARY ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: Stacy

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 7 to 4.

Beginning January 1, 2019, this bill allows established political parties to use a state funded, closed political primary system conducted by local election authorities. The local election authority will allow registration of voters as members of a particular political party and enforce time limits on registration or changing political parties as specified in the bill. The Secretary of State shall maintain voter registration records and party affiliation and provide such information back to local election authorities as specified in the bill. If the state funded closed primary system is not employed, then political parties may submit candidates chosen by caucus or some other method paid for by the political party for a general election to the requisite election authority.

Local election authorities shall notify registered voters of the primary election system using current notices mailed to voters. The voter registration application form will allow a choice of party affiliation beginning August 1, 2018. For the August 2018 primary, initial party registration will be allowed at the time of the election.

This bill is similar to HB 2761 (2016).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill will allow political parties to function as private associations with greater control over their membership. The state paid costs will encourage all political parties to participate, but parties will still have the option of holding caucuses on their own. Existing election practices have been used in order to minimize any fiscal costs.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Stacy.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.